
Why Open Skies?

Canada has been a strong supporter of Open Skies since the idea's inception. Not only will an Open Skies agreement benefit its immediate signatories, it will also contribute to the cause of international peace and security by improving the prospects for East-West stability. The benefits of Open Skies are outlined below.

Independent monitoring

An Open Skies agreement will allow participants that do not have surveillance satellites — including Canada — to independently monitor areas of particular interest or concern. The technology and facilities for aerial surveillance are well within the reach of all members of NATO and the WTO. Open Skies will let these states determine for themselves whether agreements are being adhered to and whether their security is being threatened.

Burden-sharing

An Open Skies agreement will provide an opportunity for Canada and the USA to demonstrate their willingness to shoulder some of the intrusive monitoring that the emerging era of greater political openness and conventional arms control is going to require of their European allies.

Confidence-building

Open Skies will play an extremely significant role in building confidence between the states of East and West in the 1990s. An Open Skies agreement will enable all members of the two alliances to satisfy themselves regarding the peaceful intentions of the other side. It would be virtually impossible to hide plans for a conventional attack from frequent, random reconnaissance flights.

Spur to arms control

Because the decision to participate in Open Skies is, in fact, a decision about a country's commitment to openness in its military relations, an Open Skies agreement will help to create the political climate necessary for rapid progress in arms control.

In addition, although the Open Skies agreement will be negotiated and will stand separately from any arms control agreement, short-notice overflights would help to fulfill the verification requirements of both a strategic nuclear arms agreement and a conventional arms agreement. Open Skies would allow participants to monitor ongoing activities such as weapons destruction, troop withdrawals and troop movements. Overflights would have to be supplemented by on-site inspection, but the result would be a very high degree of confidence in compliance.